

# "Sir, Are Liberty Bounds Really Necessary?"

*By Capt. Joe Cleary*

**A**fter nine months of recruit training, MCT, and their MOS school, two PFCs finally made it to the fleet. It had been a long haul, and they were eager to start living the life of a "seagoing soldier." Little did they know their eagerness soon would get the best of them.

The PFCs had finished the week-long check-in to their battalion. They had their gear, room and paperwork squared away. More importantly, they finished checking-in just in time for the Independence Day weekend. They were getting a 96-hour liberty pass from the commanding general.

Before sending the Marines off that Friday, the battalion commander and sergeant major gathered the battalion and briefed the do's and don'ts of liberty. After a company commander dismissed his company, the PFCs asked if they could travel from Camp Lejeune to Mississippi. They were told no because Mississippi was beyond the 600-mile liberty bounds of a 96.

Later that day, one of the PFCs went into town and bought a car. He returned to the barracks to pick up his friend. Despite what they had been told about the liberty bounds, by 1630, they were headed south to Mississippi on an interstate, where most of the driving was to be done.

Eleven hours and 820 miles later (0350), they were in Mississippi. Soon after crossing the border,

they turned off the interstate onto a state road—they were almost home.

Several miles later, their long journey took a turn for the worst. From the evidence, the state police theorized that the driver dozed off, and the car drifted onto a grassy shoulder. The driver sensed the change in road conditions and awoke in time to jerk the steering wheel to the left, but he overcorrected. The car spun out of control and into the path of an oncoming van. The van crashed (T-boned) into the passenger side doors and ripped through the car to the other side. Both Marines were killed instantly.

To travel 820 miles in 11 hours, the two PFCs would have had to drive at a constant speed of 75 mph, without stopping for gas.

If you're in charge of Marines, help them plan their trip, specifically where and when they should be driving. If it's a typical two-day weekend, and your Marine wants to travel out-of-bounds, consider having him take three or four days of leave to make the trip safely.

When your CO, sergeant major, or first sergeant tells you about the liberty bounds for the weekday or weekend, listen to him and abide by his orders. If you don't, you'll stand a greater chance of being the next drowsy-driving victim who provides a tragic example of why liberty bounds are necessary. ☹️